

# What are open access author fees (APC)?

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## Abstract

Open access author fee or article processing charge (APC) is the price paid for open access publication and it varies depending on the publisher and journal. The APCs finance open access publishing. However, most open access journals do not charge an APC. Open access fees are the subject of a new five-part series on the Think Open blog, and the opening article explains the basic concepts.

The article was originally published on the Think Open blog: <https://blogs.helsinki.fi/thinkopen/apc-series-1/>

An article processing charge (APC) is an article-specific fee for open publishing in open access (gold OA) or hybrid open access (hybrid OA) journals (see [open access options](#)).

All articles published in gold open access journals are openly available with no extra charge for readers, so the APCs cover the cost of publishing. The gold open access journals do not charge a subscription or license fee.

The hybrid open access journal is, as the name implies, a hybrid: it publishes both articles opened for a fee (APC) and articles behind a paywall for which a subscription fee is charged. Hybrid journals have [problems with pricing transparency and reasonableness and they have been criticized for double dipping](#). This is why they are not recommended as an open publication channel.

## APC, publication fee... Learn the concepts!

The open access fees can be referred to in different terms:

- open access fee
- APC (article processing charge), APC fee
- author fee
- publication fee (is of a broader meaning, may also apply to payments related to images, materials, etc.).

So-called submission fees, which are charged when the article is submitted, are also becoming more common. A

submission fee must be paid even if the article is not accepted for publication.

## The price gap is large – most OA journals are APC-free

The price of the APC varies considerably depending on the publisher and the journal – from tens or hundreds of euros to thousands of euros. APCs for major science publishers [range from 1500 to 3000 euros](#) (see also the blog article on [pricing criteria](#)).

In many cases, a researcher's organisation, such as the University of Helsinki, pays the APC fee instead of the researcher. However, the publisher usually assigns the payment to the corresponding author.

It's good to know that not all open access journals charge author fees. For example, most (approximately 70 percent) of the OA journals in the [DOAJ database](#) are free of charge to the researchers. That means these journals are funded in other ways. The report on open publications published by learned societies identifies [27 different models for funding open publication](#).

In the jargon of open access publishing, APC-free OA journals are also gold OA journals, but they are often referred to by the more specific term "diamond OA" or "platinum OA".

*More information on author fees and related services can be found on the University of Helsinki's [Publication Fees webpage](#) maintained by the Helsinki University Library.*